

Application for United States Letters Patent

FOR:

GAME APPARATUS AND METHOD OF PLAY

INVENTOR:

PATRICIA MC LAUGHLIN
635 EAST 14TH STREET, APT. 3-D
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10009

ATTORNEYS:

MITCHELL A. STEIN, Esq., REG. No. 30,978
STEIN & ASSOCIATES, P.C.
489 FIFTH AVENUE
29TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017
212-883-0100 (VOICE)
212-883-0101 (FAX)

GAME APPARATUS AND METHOD OF PLAY

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of games, and more particularly to a manually manipulatable game having pegs or balls as game pieces, with apertured, slidable assemblies.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Virtually everyone is familiar with portable game devices of some kind, whether it be checkers, chess, chinese checkers or the like, in which pegs, marbles or the like are placed on a board each time a player has a turn. Other peg and marble games are also known, as shown by U.S. Patent No. 3,870,311 and U.S. Patent No. 4,335,879.

Board games, a common form of past time, have been relegated to money-making types of operations (like Monopoly) and, in today's world, are largely left for rainy days, or power failures. Typically, such board games lack the types of issues that are attractive to today's person, and thus are a mode of last resort.

Educational board games are also known. For example, U.S. Patent No. 6,032,957 to Kyosaki shows a game for educating the players in the aspects of finance, investing and accounting.

However, such known game devices typically possess a static game board, in which the players have no ability to use a turn to modify the game board.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide an unusual game apparatus, in which the game board surface can be changed or altered by a player as that player's turn, rather than simply placing another game piece on the surface.

It is an additional object of the present invention to provide a gaming apparatus and method of play, that permits bidirectional, slidably reassembly of the gaming surface, while nonetheless requiring that gaming pieces resolve in a predetermined pattern for winning to be determined.

It is a still further object of the present invention to provide a portable gaming apparatus for playing a game that provides manipulation of the game board.

Finally, it is a yet further object of the present invention to provide a computer-assisted version of the game apparatus, wherein the elements are virtual and created by software, but the gaming rules and methods are the same as that shown in the physical version.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The various features of novelty which characterize the invention are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming a part of the disclosure. For a better understanding of the invention, its operating advantages, and specific objects attained by its use, reference should be had to the drawings and descriptive matter in which there are illustrated and described preferred embodiments of the invention.

The foregoing objects and other objects of the invention are achieved through a game apparatus for play by at least two players, having game pieces that are manually placed in at least four slideably mounted, apertured slats, each having at least four apertures for receiving one or more of the game pieces, and a base assembly for slideably mounting the slats, such that the slats can be moved, and said game pieces placed in said apertures, at the option of each of the players who take turns in playing the game. The object of the game is to arrive at a linear arrangement (*i.e.*, a number in a row) or a predetermined configuration (*e.g.*, a diamond).

Each player elects a color specific to a group of game pieces, and one is selected to open first. Opening can be determined by one player selecting one piece from each group of colors, placing each such piece in a different hand, hiding them behind his/her back, while the other player picks a hand. The winner of the pick then opens.

The method of play by two players involves each of the players taking turns that are selected from two possible moves: placing a game piece in one of the apertures on one of the slats or linearly displacing one of the slats one stop. It should be appreciated that in this

manner, the game board itself is reconfigured by a player. Thus, for example, if one player has three in a row, by moving a slat, the three in a row position disappears, as shown in greater detail in connection with the detailed description set forth below and the drawings appended hereto.

The complexity of play is different from a traditional board game, since a player may use his or her turn to reconfigure the board, thereby changing the dynamics of the piece arrangements. Likewise, by changing the board either a position is enhanced or a new position is established, since the configuration of the board itself is thereby altered.

A winner is determined when a player has a predetermined number of game pieces in a predetermined arrangement, generally four or eight in a row, or in a diamond or other configuration.

Under the preferred embodiment, the number of slats are generally the same as the number of apertures, and are preferably four or eight in number. Likewise, winning is established generally by having four or eight in a row. Again, it should be appreciated that when a player has three or seven in a row, this does not automatically mean that that player wins the next turn. This is because the other player may block by placing a game piece on that row, or by moving one of the slats. It should further be appreciated that moving one of the slats may enhance that player's own position (in, for example, aligning a row), or, for that matter, may align the row in a way that allows the other player to win then, or on the next subsequent turn.

Also included is a virtual game board in which the game is controlled by a computer or group of computers. The manner of play is the same, but the game is controlled by software, and the user enters his or her move by mouse or keyboard action.

It is thus a feature of the present invention to provide a game apparatus that allows a player to elect from two options at his or her turn, either placing another game piece on the board or moving a slatted assembly one stop that actually reconfigures the board.

The foregoing and other features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. It is to be understood, however, that the drawings are designed solely for purposes of illustration and not as a definition of the limits of the invention, for which reference should be made to the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the drawings, wherein similar reference characters denote similar elements through the several views:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the game apparatus, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, showing four slatted assemblies, four apertures, and game pieces assembled such that the dark color wins;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the game apparatus, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, showing the game board surface at commencement of play;

FIG. 3 is a breakaway view of one of the slatted assemblies and their directional orientation and location in the base assembly, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the subject invention;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the base assembly in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the subject invention;

FIG. 5 is a side, frontal view of a slatted assembly and its directional location in the base assembly, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the subject invention; and

FIG. 6 is a perspective view showing a computer-aided version of the game apparatus, where the apparatus is virtual, and the game is played by two users on a single computer, or multiple users over the Internet or via an intranet.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In accordance with the subject invention, and with particular reference to FIG. 1, game device 50 is shown, in which the game board has been reconfigured to show a completion of play situation. In particular, game device 50 is comprised of a plurality of slideably-mounted, apertured slats, in this embodiment, four in number, shown as items 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D, placed in base 10. Slat 2D is shown in an original, game starting position, indicating that, during play, it has not been moved.

Each of slats 2A through 2D have corrugated bottom portions 14 that are, in this embodiment, waivably pronounced to enable a "stop" that provides the slat's mobility bidirectionally, in either direction as shown by the arrow indicated in FIG. 1. (As shown in further detail below, base 10 has corresponding waived pronouncements to permit relocation of the slats with a physical indicator (*i.e.*, the relocation realigns) of a move.)

Accordingly, during play, slats (2A through 2D) are enabled to moved a "stop" representing a location in either of the two directions indicated by the arrow. In particular, with reference to slat 2C, it should be appreciated that this slat was moved, during play, one "stop" leftwardly, as indicated by its dislocation one "unit" or stop to the left of slat 2D. Likewise, slat 2B was moved during play two stops rightwardly, and slat 2A two stops leftwardly.

In this embodiment as shown in FIG. 1, game pieces 6A through 6E are "dark" in coloration, representing one player's pieces, and in the particular apertures 8, placed there, turn by turn, by that player during play. Likewise, the "light" game pieces 4A through 4E

were placed by the other player in the particular apertures 8 during play. The slats 2A, 2B and 2C were moved during play. The result of game piece location and slat movement is the linear arrangement of four game pieces 6A, 6B, 6C and 6E in a diagonal row, thereby indicating that the "dark" piece player has won the game.

FIG. 2 shows the game board in the initial stage, prior to commencement of play. There are no game pieces indicated, because play has not commenced, and slats 2A through 2D are in the "opening" position, in that the board, in this case a "four by four" in terms of number of apertures 8 and stops on the slats 2A through 2D, are all aligned in a square, on base 10. It should be appreciated that while this demonstrates a preferred "opening" or game-commencing position, other configurations of the apparatus can be presented as an opening without deviating from the spirit or scope of the claimed invention, as one of ordinary skill in the art can appreciate.

FIG. 3 reveals a perspective view of slat 2D, having waived pronouncements 14 on the bottom surface, and slides 16 that fit into corresponding slidable regions 18 on base 10. It should be appreciated that while only slat 2D is shown in FIG. 2, the other slats 2A through 2C also have the same configuration, and fit into corresponding slidable regions 18 on base 10. As a result of the waived pronouncements 14 and corresponding waived pronouncements 17 on base 10, each time a slat (2A through 2D) is moved in either of the bidirections shown by the arrow, the waived pronouncements rise the slat above the game board until resting in the next location. In this manner, a "stop" is provided, since realignment of the game board results after each of the bidirectional moves has been completed.

FIG. 4 shows, in greater perspective, base 10, comprising slidable regions 18 for receiving slides 16, and waived pronouncements 17 for carrying the slatted waived pronouncements 14.

Likewise, FIG. 5 shows the perspective separation of slat 2d from base 10, in which slide 16 is shown, and the relationship between waived pronouncements 14 and 17 is made visibly evident.

Lastly, it should be appreciated that the game may be played in a virtual manner, in which the game is software created, and played by hardware control on a personal computer 24A, or by two personal computers 24A and 24B connection optionally by way of the Internet or an intranet. The method of play is always the same.

With respect to the method of play, after each player selects a game color, and the first to start is chosen in any of a variety of known manners, each player is permitted to choose between placing a game piece in an aperture or moving one of the slots. Game continues until a predetermined configuration is achieved. The predetermined configuration may be a line of a number of game pieces that depends from the size of the board, or a geometric shape, like a diamond.

The game board may have any of a number of slats and apertures, without deviating from the spirit or scope of the invention. Generally, the number retains a square arrangement, and is ideally 4 by 4 or 8 by 8, although other configurations are permitted in accordance with the invention.

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While there have been shown, described and pointed out fundamental novel features of the invention as applied to preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood that various

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